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Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig  
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref LG/02047/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS

Janet.Finch-saunders@senedd.wales

Dear Janet Finch-Saunders

1<sup>st</sup> September 2020

Your letter of 14 August addressed to the First Minister, regarding the Welsh Government's support for Welsh wool, has been passed to me to reply as this issue falls within my Ministerial portfolio.

I am keenly aware of the challenges the Covid-19 pandemic is causing the wool industry. As you may know, the farmer-owned co-operative British Wool collects, grades, markets and sells wool on behalf of the majority of wool producers in Wales and the rest of the UK. British Wool decided not to make advance payments to farmers in 2020 because of the uniquely challenging market conditions. However, I welcome its commitment to make additional payments to farmers should the price it eventually receives for wool exceed the current rate.

HM Treasury has confirmed British Wool is not eligible for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) because it is a public body, despite operating largely on a commercial basis. I met with representatives of British Wool on 5 August to discuss the situation and I understand they have since sought equivalent support to the CBILS from the UK Government. I have written to George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to request an urgent response on their behalf.

My officials are in regular contact with DEFRA and the other Devolved Administrations and they are receiving ongoing updates on the latest situation in the industry. We continue to work with Welsh farmers to help mitigate the impact of Covid-19 and support their long term profitability and resilience. I will consider all options which will help add value to wool and I encourage farmers to explore new markets and new buyers including self-processing or sales to independent wool merchants and local buyers. The decarbonisation of our homes and buildings will offer significant green economic recovery opportunities in Wales. As wool is already an established insulation measure provided it complies Building Regulations, I encourage British Wool and farmers themselves to act quickly to develop this market further.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In response to your question about the use of wool in public buildings, the specification of particular insulation and carpeting materials are design decisions which are usually made at an early stage well before procurement. Building regulations are not material specific in relation to the construction of buildings. It might not be appropriate to use wool in all projects because sometimes alternatives such as the refurbishment of existing carpets, or the use of other materials such as recycled post-consumer plastics, may be the most cost-effective and environmentally-sustainable options. However, I am pleased to say the Welsh Government's own Facilities Management team has committed to consider the more widespread use of wool in our estate in future, subject to the required compliance testing and certification.

Regards



**Lesley Griffiths AS/MS**

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